

A/TA

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and industry supporters of the air mobility mission.

The convention was at the Anaheim Marriott Hotel and featured seminars, aerospace industry exhibits, and social functions including receptions, an awards banquet and a farewell brunch.

Gen. Charles "Tony" Robertson, Commander in Chief, U.S. Transportation Command, and Air Mobility Command commander, presented a Young Leadership award to Capt. Chuck Nessemier, 437th Aircraft Generation Squadron at the awards banquet Saturday evening. Each year 12 winners receive the AT/A award at the national convention.

"He competed against all specialties from the whole command," said Lt. Col. John Zazworsky, 437 AW acting staff director, chief of safety and Low Country Chapter A/TA board advisor. "That's a pretty big feather in his cap."

Keynote speakers at the convention were Gen. Ralph Eberhart, U.S. Space Command commander in chief, Gen. Eric Shinseki, Army Chief of Staff, and Robertson.

Airman 1st Class Josh Zellers, 437th Transportation Squadron vehicle operations dispatcher, said Shinseki was his favorite of the three. "I never realized how much the Army relies on us for everything, to get where they're going," said Zellers.

Of the other 33 seminars offered, 19 were AMC and Tanker Airlift Control Center briefs. Others were Air Staff, Air Education and Training Command and Air Mobility Warfare Center air mobility perspectives. There were also several seminars in which air mobility "war stories" were told.

Staff Sgt. Jennifer Eagle, 437th Support Group command section information manager, said her favor-

ite seminar was about Operation Babylift. Col. Regina Aune, 437th Medical Group commander, was one of the briefers and a survivor of a C-5 crash that occurred shortly after takeoff while airlifting orphans out of Vietnam during the 1975 evacuation of Saigon. Aune was a flight nurse for the Operation Babylift mission, and she joined a pilot and loadmaster for the seminar to relate their experiences on that flight.

"Col. Aune was right there, a young lieutenant, a hero," said Eagle.

Attendees were also able to sign up for Boeing tours of the C-17 production lines. "That was the best part to me," said Capt. Elaine Washington, 437th Medical Operations Squadron flight medicine nurse manager. "I enjoyed seeing how it's set up. It's a huge plant."

Several receptions daily provided an opportunity for attendees to visit with old friends and network with others in the air mobility community.

"I got to see a lot of friends from different bases I'd lost contact with," said Eagle.

"The convention was kind of a reblueing experience," she said. "It instituted a lot of pride and esprit de corps, pride in the profession of arms."

Findley gave high praise to the convention and to the Low Country Chapter board for planning the trip. "I went to my first one of these conventions in 1996, and as long as I'm capable, I'll keep going," he said. "It's a great experience for everybody—learning, having a good time, and sharing ideas. It's great training and great comradery. Dave Rodriguez and his team did a fabulous job coordinating the trip."

The national AT/A has more than 4,000 members, according to Rodriguez. Membership costs \$25 annually, and membership benefits and programs include a quarterly magazine, annual national conventions, educational programs, college



Photo by Capt. Tracy Velino

Lt. Col. Dave Rodriguez (right), 17th Airlift Squadron director of operations and Low Country Chapter of the Airlift/Tanker Association president, welcomes Chief Master Sgt. Ernest Houston, 6th Maintenance Squadron chief of maintenance, MacDill AFB, Fla., aboard a C-17.

scholarships, awards and heritage programs to recognize outstanding contributors to air mobility.

The Low Country Chapter has 239 members. One hundred forty-six are active duty or DOD civilians assigned to CAFB, 43 are Boeing employees, and the rest are retirees and others from the local air mobility community. To join the chapter, cost is a \$10 one-time fee for staff sergeants and below, \$15 for all others.

The Low Country Chapter is always looking for new members, said 1st Lt. Grant Meadows, membership chairman and 437th Maintenance Squadron maintenance flight commander. "We need more support people and more enlisted. The Airlift/Tanker Association is great for retention because you get to see the big picture," he said.

The chapter meets quarterly and has social functions and fundraisers throughout the year. The next planned event is a road rally, Nov. 17, at noon. "It's kind of like a scavenger hunt in vehicles," said Mead-

ows. Everyone is invited, but there is a limit of 30 teams with a minimum of two people per team. The cost per team is \$30 plus four non-perishable food items and includes two free t-shirts and free food and drinks. Prizes will go to the top finishers.

During the cross-country flight from MacDill to Los Alamitos field, the crew aerial refueled with MacDill KC-135s. Passengers were rotated to the cockpit to view the sister wing aircraft refueling the C-17.

Rodriguez said CAFB teamed up with its active duty sister wing in part to fulfill crewmember training currency. "It was a perfect fit," he said. "We were able to help them by picking up their people, and they were able to help us with our air refueling training requirements."

Zellers said the trip was a good learning experience. "It's a chance to get out and see what other aspects of airlift are, like refueling," he said. "And it's a chance to meet high ranking Air Force leaders and other air mobility personnel."

Raise

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Savings Plan, according to the release. The plan, which is already used in the Federal Employees Retirement System, will allow military members to invest a percentage of their pre-tax pay toward retirement. Taxes on participants' investments and earnings are deferred while in the plan. Details remain to be worked out.

The budget also changes some aspects of the TRICARE military medical system, according to the release. TRICARE Prime Remote now covers active-duty personnel and their family members. TRICARE Prime will eliminate the co-payments for the family members. Travel reimbursements to those who must go more than 100 miles to see a TRICARE

health-care provider are now authorized.

In the release, the biggest TRICARE change was how TRICARE covers Medicare-eligible retirees. The act is supposed to restructure TRICARE to allow Medicare-eligible military retirees and their family members to continue their coverage beginning in fiscal year 2002. Medicare-eligible beneficiaries would pay no co-payments, deductibles, TRICARE enrollment fees or premiums. Any medical expense not covered by Medicare will be paid by TRICARE.

"Details still need to be worked out," said Leonard Millender, 437th Medical Group benefits advisor. "It's too early right now to talk about the exact effects of the program. TRICARE Management will be briefing us in the next couple weeks."

Operation Christmas Child at CAFB

By Tech. Sgt. Dan Murphy
437 AW Public Affairs

Charleston AFB personnel are encouraged to participate in Operation Christmas Child by dropping a shoebox filled with personal items into a squadron collection box or the base chapel by Wednesday.

The boxes will be gathered and shipped to Samaritan's Purse in Boone, N.C., where they will be sent to more than 2.3 million children in 50 countries, said Kathie Canino, Charleston AFB project spokesperson.

"We are attempting to get 500 boxes this year," said Senior Master Sgt. James Moody, 437th Operations Group superintendent. "We collected over 300 last year,

so we know we can do it."

Personnel need only pick up a brochure from a squadron representative and follow the instructions.

According to the brochure, the first thing to do is find a shoe box and decide whether it will be for a girl or a boy and the age category. Fill the box with a variety of gifts to include small toys, school supplies and hygiene items. Do not include any used, war-related or perishable items. Liquids, medicines and breakable items are also discouraged.

"You may also include a hair brush or a comb," said Canino. "Other items needed are gum, hard candy, a toothbrush and a bar of soap."

Many people wrap the box with Christmas decoration.

"If you wrap the box, please ensure you wrap the lid separate so the box can be inspected before shipping," said Canino. "The last thing you do is to place a check for five dollars, payable to Samaritan's Purse, on top of the contents, place a rubber band around the box and drop off to the pick-up point in your squadron."

The final collection point will be at the base chapel where all the squadron boxes will be brought.

"If you don't make it to the squadron drop-off box, you can always drop it off to the chapel," said Chaplain (Capt.) Mike Newton. "We also have additional forms available."

For more information, call your squadron representative or Moody at 963-6009.